



County of Los Angeles CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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March 25, 2010

To: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: William T Fujioka
Chief Executive Officer

SACRAMENTO UPDATE

This memorandum contains a pursuit of County position on a bill to increase distributions from civil court filing fees for local dispute resolution programs; a status on County-advocacy legislation related to the Wraparound Services Program and an Assembly Concurrent Resolution to declare May as Perinatal Depression Awareness Month; and an update on County-interest gas tax swap legislation.

Pursuit of County Position on Legislation

AB 1718 (Monning), as amended on March 11, 2010, would increase civil court filing fees by \$5 and raise the cap on the use of these fees for local dispute resolution programs from \$8 to \$13.

The Dispute Resolution Program Act of 1986 grants each county board of supervisors the authority to establish dispute resolution programs and direct up to \$8 from civil court filing fees to fund these programs. The current cap on civil court filing fees is \$8 and has been in place since 1992.

The Community and Senior Services (CSS) Department administers the County's Dispute Resolution Program through 14 contract agencies. The Dispute Resolution Program provides an alternative to more costly court proceedings in which a dispute is brought before a judge or a jury. Trained volunteers provide mediation, reconciliation,

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and arbitration services to assist individuals to resolve a variety of disputes, such as consumer-merchant, landlord-tenant, neighbor conflicts, personal injury, property damage, business-to-business, and other types of disputes. The majority of referrals come from the courts or prosecutors offices. In FY 2008-09, approximately 49,000 cases were resolved through the County's Dispute Resolution Program.

The Community and Senior Services Department annual budget for the Dispute Resolution Program is approximately \$3.3 million. AB 1718 would grant county board of supervisors authority to increase the cap on civil court filing fees to up to \$13. According to CSS, if enacted, this measure would provide an additional \$2 million annually for the County's Dispute Resolution Program. These funds would help serve more clients and alleviate court costs by providing additional resources for mediation, dispute resolution and arbitration referrals.

The Community and Senior Services Department and this office support AB 1718. Therefore, consistent with existing policy to support proposals that maintain or increase funding for the Dispute Resolution Program, and consistent with the County's prior support of similar legislation, SB 1177 (Ridley-Thomas) of 2008, which would have increased civil court filing fees by \$5 and raise the cap on the use of these fees for dispute resolution programs, **the Sacramento advocates will support AB 1718.**

AB 1718 is in the Assembly Committee on Judiciary awaiting a hearing. This measure is sponsored by the California Dispute Resolution Council. There is no registered support or opposition on file.

Status of County-Advocacy Legislation

County-supported AB 1758 (Ammiano), which as amended on March 23, 2010, would remove the designation of the Wraparound Services Program as a pilot project, and authorize all counties to provide comprehensive services to allow children to remain in a family-like setting in lieu of placement in a group home, passed the Assembly Human Services on March 23, 2010 by a vote of 18 to 0. As amended, this measure would require a county that terminates its Wraparound Services Program to ensure that services for children participating in the program are met with no disruption until the case is closed. This measure now proceeds to the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

County-supported ACR 105 (Nava), which as amended on March 9, 2010, would proclaim the month of May each year as Perinatal Depression Awareness Month, passed the Assembly Health Committee on March 23, 2010 by a vote of 6 to 0, and now proceeds to the Assembly Floor.

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Status of County-Interest Legislation

SB 70 (Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee), which would make technical changes to the recently enacted gas tax swap legislation to recognize special users of fuel, was signed by the Governor on March 23, 2010. While the gas tax swap legislation would not change the fuel prices for typical consumers, certain fuel users receive tax breaks in current law and would have seen a net increase in taxes. This measure ensures that special users that receive tax breaks in current law, such as railroads and purchasers of aviation gasoline, will not be adversely affected by the gas tax swap legislation. This measure also makes other technical and clarifying changes requested by the Board of Equalization.

We will continue to keep you advised.

WTF:RA
MR:IGEA:sb

c: All Department Heads
Legislative Strategist
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